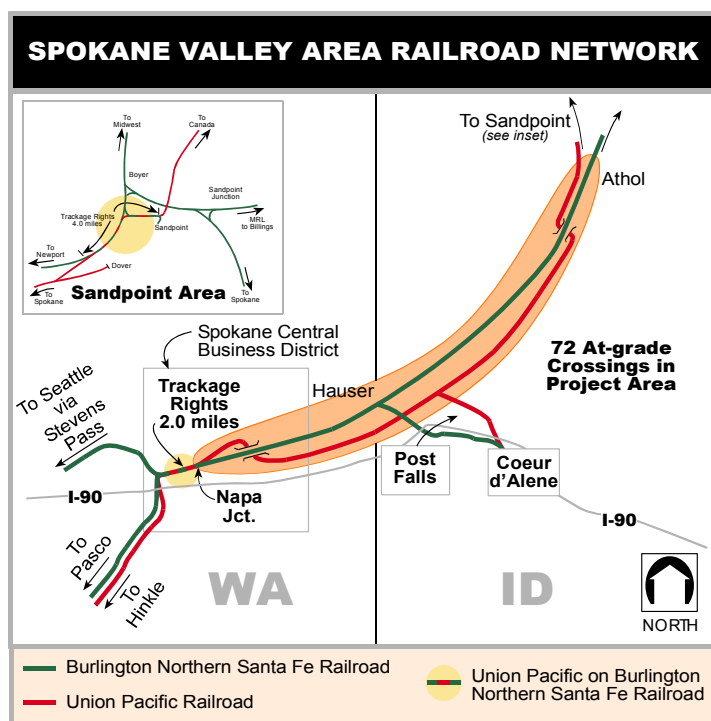


# Bridging The Valley

## Status Report and Implementation Schedule

September 5, 2002



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Click here to go to the [Bridging the Valley](#) website.

**Bridging The Valley**  
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The Bridging the Valley (BTV) project is a community-initiated project to explore the creation of one common railroad corridor from which Burlington Northern Santa Fe Railway and Union Pacific Railroad would operate between Spokane, Washington and Athol, Idaho. This 42 mile corridor presently has 72 railroad crossings (46 in Washington) with over 494 trains operations per week. Growth in train traffic is forecast to increase annually by 3.4% over the next 20 years. Traffic accidents, traffic congestion from roadway closures, increased carbon monoxide emissions in the serious non-attainment area and noise significantly effect the economy, health, safety and general welfare of the public in Spokane and Kootenai Counties, and therefore the Inland Northwest.

The Bridging the Valley project would eliminate approximately 51 at-grade crossings through closure (35 in Washington) and relocation of the Union Pacific Railroad mainline into the Burlington Northern Santa Fe Railway corridor. The remaining 21 crossings are either currently grade separated (5 existing grade separations in Washington) or would be graded separated (6 in Washington) as part of this project. This approach would concentrate public investment into 8 railroad grade separations within Washington State into one corridor to cross two railroads rather than spread out public investment into 61 railroad crossings spread across 87 miles of railroad track. With an estimated total project cost of 252 million in 2001 dollars (165 million in Washington / 87 million in Idaho), the Benefit/Cost ratio of 1.4 indicates it's a project that makes economic sense and has benefits far exceeding its cost to the public (80 million in net present value).

**Request:**

The railroads have confirmed through a rail operational analysis that Bridging the Valley as planned, can meet the existing and future needs of both the railroads. Meetings with executive level management at Union Pacific Railroad in Omaha, NE and Burlington Northern Santa Fe Railway in Fort Worth, TX have been ongoing and productive. Both railroads have agreed to the physical and operational plans that have been developed.

The challenge now, is demonstrating to the railroads that we're serious about this project. The next phase of the project requires an engineering and design effort for three critical aspects of the project. They include:

1. Engineering and Design of Identified Grade Separations that need to be constructed in the BNSF corridor,
2. Engineering and Design of a Twin Track Railroad Bridge Across the Spokane River east of S.R. 27 adjacent to S.R. 290, and

3. Engineering and Design effort to complete the double track in the BNSF corridor.

Since this project also involves the relocation of Union Pacific into the BNSF corridor, it will be necessary to relocate the existing Union Pacific's Spokane Yard presently located adjacent to the Spokane Interstate Fairgrounds. This initial effort would also include the acquisition of property for the eventual relocation of the Spokane Yard. This would be done to avoid escalating property costs and speculative buying that could significantly increase project costs.

The SRTC Board on July 11, 2002 allocated 4.23 million dollars in STP/CMAQ funding to support entering into preliminary engineering and design of the project. The Idaho Transportation Department is actively developing a program to finance their side of the preliminary engineering and design effort, which is approximately 3.2 million dollars. The railroads have agreed that as part of the project, they would contribute approximately 6 million dollars. These funds would be used during the construction phase.

**In order to advance into the implementation phase, the Spokane and Kootenai County area will need to seek identification of this 260 million dollar project into the upcoming re-authorization of TEA-21 legislation that will begin in early 2003. Inclusion in the multi-year reauthorization bill will demonstrate this is a serious project worthy of the railroads continued participation.** These reauthorization funds would be used to support the implementation of the efforts outlined above. Additional funds will also be sought through State and local sources to assist in moving into construction upon completion of the engineering and design phase. The projects implementation schedule would span from 2003 to 2008.

Ultimately, this project will create, by 2008, a triple track railroad corridor with a completely grade separated roadway system. Both railway and roadway systems will be able to operate more efficiently and effectively throughout the corridor. The public can expect a significantly safer transportation system, with less congestion and delay, as well as an environment with less carbon monoxide and substantially less noise pollution from train whistle blowing at the 52 at-grade crossings that currently exist in Washington.

Washington State and the Inland Northwest can expect improved freight mobility from Northwest Seaports to the east, maintaining the competitive edge they currently enjoy.



BNSF @ Pines and Trent



UP @ Pines and I-90 Interchange



## Bridging the Valley

This study was conducted to analyze the potential for relocating of the existing Union Pacific (UPSP) main line between Spokane and Athol, Idaho, to an alignment within or adjacent to the Burlington Northern Santa Fe (BNSF) main line corridor. The UPSP line has 52 at-grade crossings, or crossings that intersect roadways, and two grade separations in the study area which handles eight to 10 trains per day. The BNSF line has 20 at-grade crossings, six grade separations and 60 to 70 trains per day. Combining rail operations or placing tracks into a single corridor as studied, has a positive effect on future economic growth, traffic mobility, traffic safety, train whistle noise abatement.

Four mainline alternatives and two branch line alternatives are included in the study. Click on the highlighted alternative title for details.

### Mainline Alternatives

- [Dedicated Union Pacific \(UP\) Mainline north of Burlington Northern/Santa Fe \(BNSF\)](#)
- [Dedicated UP Mainline south of BNSF](#)
- [Trackage rights to Velox with UP north of BNSF](#)
- [Trackage rights to Hauser with UP north of BNSF](#)

### Branch Line Alternatives

- [Provide substitute transload service](#)
- [Retain portions of UP mainline plus BNSF branch](#)

### Other modeling projects

- [Bigelow Gulch Major Investment Analysis](#)
- [Environmental Assessment of the SVC](#)
- [Growth Management/Land Use Forecast](#)
- [Inter-City Bus Service](#)
- [Monroe-Lincoln Corridor Study](#)
- [North Spokane Limited Access Corridor](#)
- [Metropolitan Transportation Plan](#)
- [State Implementation Plan](#)

- [Transportation Management Center](#)
- [Valley Corridor](#)

